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ABSTRACT

Many individuals are concerned that the "knowledge explosion" in special education is making it difficult to keep up with research in the field. However, at the same time that knowledge has been expanding, efficient ways of locating knowledge have developed and additional sources of integrative reviews of research have appeared. The paper describes major sources of comprehensive reviews, indexes and other information sources on special education. General reviews of special education research, including "Advances in Special Education" (Keogh) and "Yearbook of Special Education" are introduced, as well as reviews of educational research and psychology which contain information of interest to special educators. Suggestions are offered for locating research on specific topics via indexes (such as "Exceptional Child Education Resources," "Current Index to Journals in Education," and indexes specific to disability areas such as "Low Vision Abstracts"), guides to dissertations and theses (e.g., "Dissertation Abstracts International"), guides to tests (e.g., "Tests in Print II"), and guides to government publications, computer searching, and basic guides (such as D. Berry's "Bibliographic Guide to Educational Research"). (CL)

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EFFICIENT LOCATION OF INFORMATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Major sources of comprehensive reviews, indexes and other information sources are described.

Efficient Location of Information in Special Education

Many are concerned that the "knowledge explosion" in special education is making it difficult to keep up with research in the field. However, at the same time that knowledge has been expanding, efficient ways of locating knowledge have developed and additional sources of integrative reviews of research have appeared.

General Reviews

For the special educator seeking overviews of research in a particular area several sources are available. Keogh's Advances in Special Education (1980-) is a new series of volumes gathering recent studies in Special Education. Volume one focuses on theoretical constructs that provide the basis for Special Education practices. Volume two deals with varying perspectives on applications of these th[illegible]ies. More volumes are planned for the future.

Mann and Sabatino's First, Second, Third, and Fourth Reviews of Special Education (1973, 1974, 1976, 1980) present comprehensive examinations of major fields and briefer evaluations of special areas and concerns in Special Education.

The Yearbook of Special Education (1975-1982) includes (1) reviews which summarize and evaluate research, (2) current status of federal and state legislation, and (3) current listings of research. Successive volumes up-date the first two volumes and also include a glossary of terms and a directory of associations concerned with the handicapped.

The most recent edition of this very useful reference source was published in 1982.

Each annual volume of Ellis' International Review of Research in Mental Retardation (1966-) describes current research and theory development in the field.

Summaries of interest to special educators also appear in more general reviews. Three of these are sponsored by the American Educational Research Association. The Review of Educational Research (1931-) is a quarterly journal of summary reviews of narrowly defined topics. The Review of Research in Education (1972-), an annual volume, emphasizes current research and research methods and what needs to be done in the field. Mitzel's (1982) Encyclopedia of Educational Research is the fifth edition of a work which is produced approximately once a decade. All editions provide comprehensive reviews of a wide variety of topics. Many studies that are of interest to special educators are summarized in the Annual Review of Psychology (1950-) published by the American Psychological Association.

Locating Research on a Specific Topic

Several indexes are available for locating research on specific topics. These all use some form of key term or descriptor for indexing the materials they contain. For example, research on teaching arithmetic to the mentally retarded can be located by using the key terms "teaching arithmetic" and "mentally retarded" or synonyms for them. This can be done "by hand" or through computer systems. Some serials include abstracts of the indexed materials, others do not.

Indexes

Exceptional Child Education Resources (1969-) includes a comprehensive listing of materials in special education and provides abstracts of journals, some books, curriculum materials, research reports, papers, and administrative surveys. The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), part of the Department of Education, publishes the more general Current Index to Journals in Education (1969-) (journal articles) and Resources in Education (1964-) (other materials). All three have subject and author indexes and can be searched through computer systems. Many universities and state education departments provide free or inexpensive computer searches of the ERIC abstracts to their clients.

Education Index is the other standard periodical index in the field covering all subject areas. This index is the best source for locating journals prior to the establishment of Current Index to Journals in Education in 1969. No abstracts are provided for its listings.

Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Abstracts (1964-) formerly called Mental Retardation Abstracts, covers the developmental aspects and treatment and training of the mental retardate and also is useful in the planning and legislation areas. DSH Abstracts (1960-) is a joint venture of Gallaudet College and the American Speech and Hearing Association. It includes the literature on deafness, speech, and hearing publications in all major langauges. Low Vision Abstracts (1975-1979) indexed periodical literature on visual handicaps. Chicorel Abstracts to Reading and Learning Disabilities (1975-) includes information dealing with research, teaching strategies, services and

materials for children with learning disorders. The coverage of this index is comprehensive, over 130 current journals from kindergarten to college students. Psychological Abstracts (1969-) includes most of the special education journals in its scope.

Social Sciences Citation Index (1967-) indexes by subject, author (Source Index) and corporate source. Its most useful feature is the Citation Index. Here all the references cited in the works in the Source Index are listed by author and title. This enables the user to pursue a line of inquiry forward in time. For example, suppose one has found an article "Token Economy in Arithmetic Instruction for the Mentally Retarded" published by T. S. Brown in 1978 particularly relevant to one's interest. By consulting the Citation Indexes from that date to the present and looking up Brown, T. S. and his specific article one can locate subsequent articles that have cited it. Some of the articles thus located will be continuations or variations in Brown's work. The Citation Index is an excellent means for keeping up to date on a particular line of inquiry. Abstracts are not provided.

Index Medicus (1960-) is a very comprehensive index to the world's medical literature. Articles from approximately 2,300 periodicals are indexed. Each issue is arranged in three parts, a subject listing, authors' names and a bibliography of medical reviews. This index is included in many online computer access programs. No abstracts are provided.

Rehabilitation Literature (1942-) contains a variety of useful materials, including book reviews, abstracts and feature articles of

interest to professional personnel concerned with the rehabilitation of the handicapped.

Guides to Dissertations and Theses

For locating doctoral dissertations, Dissertation Abstracts International (1952-) published by University Microfilms includes abstracts of doctoral dissertations from over 150 universities across the United States and Canada. It is published monthly with annual indexes. Comprehensive Dissertation Index 1861-1972 published in 1973, covers dissertations from 1861 to 1972. The 32 subject index volumes are divided into disciplines; Social Sciences, Psychology, Education, Communication and the Arts, Language and Literatu[illegible] University Microfilms has its own computer search service called Datrix and it has also made its data base available to the major computer service vendors such as Lockheed and IBM. Many libraries that have online computer searching subscribe to these data bases and so have access to Dissertation Abstracts International's information. Master Abstracts: A Catalog of Selected Masters Thesis on Microfilm (1962-) published by University Microfilms, provides abstracts of a selected list of master's theses submitted by various American universities and colleges.

University Microfilms also publishes American Doctoral Dissertations (1957-) a complete listing of all doctoral dissertations accepted by American universities, compiled from commencement programs issued by universities and colleges. It is published annually and is arranged by subject categories and institutions. An author index is also included. Phi Delta Kappa's Research Studies in Education (1953-1970) lists dissertations in the field of education arranged by subject.

Silvey's Master Theses in Education (1952-) is an annual listing of theses from universities and colleges in the United States in education. For each thesis listed the author, title, and institution is given.

Guides to Tests

A basic source for locating standardized tests in various subject fields, with critical reviews, is Buros' Mental Measurement Yearbooks (1938-). Tests in Print II serves as an index and supplement to the previous volumes of Mental Measurement Yearbooks.

Two specialized guides are Compton's A Guide to 65 Diagnostic Tests for Special Education (1979) which lists and evaluates the strengths and limitations of 65 diagnostic tests commonly used and Mauser's Assessing the Learning Disabled: Selected Instruments (1977) which lists over 300 tests for evaluating children and adults with learning disabilities.

Government Publications

The United States government, a major source of information, sponsors more research, conducts more surveys, and collects more statistics of all kinds than any other organization in the United States. The new Department of Education as well as the National Center for Educational Statistics disseminates a vast amount of statistical data in the form of research reports, surveys, administrative actions, and descriptive programs.

For locating specific U.S. government publications, the Monthly Catalog of Government Publications (1885-) is the prime index to consult. Published monthly, it consists of two parts, a main section that lists the various documents published by agencies alphabetically, and a title, author, and subject index in the back of each issue. There

are annual compilations by title and subject in the December issue of each year through 1975. From 1976 on, there are two six month compilations for each year. There are also five year cummulative indexes for faster searching back through the years.

Publications of state departments of education and other state agencies can be located in Monthly Checklist of State Publications (1910-).

Computer Searching

Many of the sources cited have been incorporated into computer data bases including ERIC, Exceptional Education Resources, Medlars (Medicine, Nursing, Dentistry), NIMIS (Instructional Materials for Education of the Handicapped) as well as Psychological Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Social Science Citation Index, and Dissertation Abstracts International. Many institutions have librarians trained in the use of computer searching who can explain the services available and costs. Most researchers find computer searching well worth the price not only because of saving time and labor but because of the computer's capacity for doing highly complex searches combining many concepts and terms.

Basic Guides

More extensive treatment of how to locate information in education is provided by basic guides. Berry's (1975, 1980) Bibliographic Guide to Educational Research, first and second editions, lists over 772 important research sources with descriptive annotations for each. Emphasis is given to recently published sources. Sections one through six cover different types of research material such as: books,

periodicals, government publications and tests. Other types of research reference sources described are: encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, statistical sources, yearbooks, directories, and biographical sources. A separate section on ERIC documents and computer searching of ERIC materials is included. There is also a section listing handbooks on the methodology of educational research and on form and style in writing research papers.

Woodbury's A Guide to Sources of Educational Information (2nd ed.) (1982) is a comprehensive guide to locating information relating to education and educational affairs. It contains detailed descriptions of more than 700 published and institutional sources plus chapters on how to locate them and how to use them.

Another comprehensive basic guide is Sheehy's Guide to Reference Books (1976-). This guide briefly describes and evaluates several thousand reference sources. This publication is kept up to date by means of biennial supplements.

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